

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0230

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: UN, XF, IS
SUBJECT: SYG WALDHEIM VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST

REF: (A) USUN 0055, (B) CAIRO 0456

1. CONVERSATIONS WITH ISRAELI OFFICIALS REVEAL THAT THEY ARE CONTEMPLATING A WALDHEIM VISIT WITH SOMETHING LESS THAN GREAT ENTHUSIASM. THEIR OPTIMUM DESIRE WOULD BE TO LIMIT HIS ROLE IN MIDDLE EAST DISCUSSIONS TO A CEREMONIAL ONE AND THEY ARE CONCERNED THAT HE IS UNDERTAKING A SEMINGLY MORE ACTIVE ROLE, THOUGH THEY ARE AWARE OF THE PRESSURES HE IS UNDER. THE LAST TIME HE VISITED ISRAEL WAS IN NOVEMBER 1975, JUST PRIOR TO RENEWAL OF THE UNDOF MANDATE AND THE ENSUING SC DISCUSSION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM WHICH WAS SO DISTASTEFUL TO THE ISRAELIS.

2. CAIRO 0456 QUOTES PRESS REPORTS INDICATING THAT THE SYG'S ITINERARY WILL BE EGYPT, SYRIA, JORDAN AND ISRAEL IN THAT ORDER. IF TRUE, THIS STRIKES US AS POSSIBLY
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LOGICAL BUT PERHAPS NOT PARTICULARLY HELPFUL IN MOVING THE PROBLEM FORWARD. AS SEEN FROM HERE, IT MIGHT BE BEST IF WALDHEIM BEGAN THIS TRIP IN ISRAEL, RATHER THAN COME HERE AT THE END OF VISITS TO ARAB COUNTRIES. (LAST TIME HE CAME HERE AFTER VISITING SYRIA, WHERE THE ISRAELIS FEEL HE WENT TOO FAR IN HIS EAGERNESS TO BUY AN UNDOF EXTENSION). GRANTED HIS TALKING FIRST WITH ISRAELI

LEADERS WOULD NOT GUARANTEE A SUBSTANTIVE DENT ON THE PROBLEMS TO BE FACED, BUT PSYCHOLOGICALLY IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL TO LET THE ISRAELIS FEEL THAT THIS TIME THEY WERE MAKING THE INITIAL AREA IMPRESSION ON THE SYG, NOT MERELY REACTING TO IMPRESSIONS HE HAD RECEIVED IN COUNTRIES THEY REGARD AS HOSTILE. THERE IS AN INCREASING TENDENCY FOR THE ISRAELIS TO FEEL "CORNERED," AND THEY ARE NOT LIKELY TO WANT TO, OR EVEN TO BE ABLE TO, MAKE CONCESSIONS IN THAT CIRCUMSTANCE. RIGHTLY OR NOT, THEY SEE THEMSELVES AS ALWAYS "IN THE DOCK."

3. NO MATTER WHEN HE ARRIVES HERE, HOWEVER, WALDHEIM'S RECEPTION WILL BE FROSTY IF HE EMPHASIZES RECENT GA RESOLUTIONS CONDEMNATORY OF ISRAEL RATHER THAN THOSE OF THE SC SUCH AS 242 AND 338, WHICH TO THE ISRAELIS REPRESENT ABOUT AS FAR AS THEY CAN GO (AND THERE ARE EVEN "INTERPRETATIONS" OF THOSE RESOLUTIONS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT). WALDHEIM WILL, OF COURSE, BE ARRIVING HERE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE ISRAELI ELECTION CAMPAIGN, PROBABLY AT A TIME WHEN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE DOMINANT LABOR PARTY HAS NOT YET BEEN DETERMINED BETWEEN RABIN AND PERES. THIS COULD LEAD TO A CERTAIN POSTURING BUT IT WILL PROBABLY NOT AFFECT THE ESSENTIALS OF THE ISRAELI POSITION AS PRESENTED TO WALDHEIM. AS IT PREPARES ITS ELECTION CAMPAIGN, THE LABOR PARTY, WITH ITS CENTER-LEFT ORIENTATION, IS HAVING PROBLEMS WITH THE CONCEPT OF WITHDRAWALS ON THE WEST BANK, LET ALONE ANYTHING REMOTELY LIKE A PULL-BACK TO THE 1967 BORDERS. ON THE RIGHT, THE OPPOSITION LIKUD

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HAS RECENTLY ABJURED ANY WITHDRAWALS EXCEPT PARTIAL ONES ON THE GOLAN AND SINAI.

4. IN REGARD TO THE GENERAL TERMS OF A POSSIBLE MEPC SCENARIO (PARA 3 OF USUN 0055), WHILE THE ISRAELIS MIGHT CONCEIVABLY BE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN A WORKING GROUP WHICH BORE THE TITLE "ISRAEL/PALESTINIAN-JORDAN WORKING GROUP," THEY WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO ACCEPT A GROUP WHICH CALLED ITSELF "ISRAEL/JORDAN (INCLUDING PALESTINIAN) WORKING GROUP." WE HAVE NOT, HOWEVER, DISCUSSED THIS ISSUE WITH THEM.

5. IN RECENT DAYS THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS OF A TRIP TO THE AREA BY SECRETARY-DESIGNATE VANCE. THIS WOULD CERTAINLY BE WELCOMED BY THE ISRAELIS AND THEY WOULD COME MUCH CLOSER TO OUTLINING THEIR FINAL POSITION ON THE PEACE ISSUE TO THE SECRETARY THAN THEY WOULD TO WALDHEIM. IT WOULD NOT BE AS IMPORTANT WHETHER THE SECRETARY VISITED HERE FIRST, LAST OR ENROUTE. WALDHEIM'S

VISIT THEY SEE, HOWEVER, IN QUITE ANOTHER LIGHT.
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